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MASCULINE AND FEMININE OCCUPATIONS.

BY MARION FOSTER WASHBURN.

THE industrial expansion of women which has marked the last quarter-century has been accomplished in the face of an opposition by no means yet at an end. Every now and then reactions have set in, and, on the whole, these have been salutary in their effect. Such a reaction prevails at the present moment, affording the wary a welcome pause for reflection.

There are ample grounds for opposition. For one thing, the cry grows louder that men are being crowded out by women. Office forces are now almost wholly composed of women. There are not only many more women teachers in the public schools—the Report of the Commissioner of Education for 1889 gives the per cent. as 68.3, and that ratio has almost certainly increased—but the number of girls in the higher grades and in the High Schools is steadily greater than that of the boys. This means, of course, that there are more women than men who are receiving the training necessary for the better-paid business positions—not the best paid, but the middle places. In fact, I think it could be shown that, outside of the lowest places, those requiring the greatest amount of physical strength and the least amount of brains, and of the highest places, those involving executive ability of a high order and bringing in the greatest rewards, women are occupying the fields of labor with a rapidity well calculated to carry dismay to a conservative mind.

This brings about, of course, a disorganization of industries hitherto planned to meet masculine exigencies alone. Women, it must be admitted, do introduce a disturbing element. For one thing, the sex-ferment is uncomfortable in business places. It may, to be sure, and probably does, break the monotony of the long day's work; but it also interferes considerably with the

smooth running of the commercial machine. For another thing, women are frequently not able to support the long, relentless hours of work required by modern industrial routine. In our large office-buildings, rest rooms for women have become a necessity; and I agree with Mrs. Thompson that the sofas in these rooms are seldom without their burden of pale, exhausted women. It looks all wrong. One's instinct is to ask where their fathers and brothers are, or alas! their husbands. When one learns that the men of the family are out of work, or work only part of the time, or get too low wages to support their families, one is inclined to wonder whether the old way was not the best; and whether these poor things would not be better off at home cooking or sewing, while the men folks toiled in the hard ways of the world.

And this brings us to another difficulty: the vexed question of wages. One instance will illustrate the effect of the employment of women in the lowering of wages. We have already seen what the percentage of women teachers is; these women receive on an average \$38 14 a month, while the men receive \$45 25. It is plain that women are willing to work for less than men, and that, as long as they are, more of them will be employed, wherever possible; and the pay of men will have to be lowered to meet their competition. Is it not clear that if there were a law forbidding the employment of women teachers, there would be an increase in the number of men employed and in the salaries paid to them?

Besides these valid objections, there is the complaint that women are less skilful workmen than men; that they work in the expectation of marriage and therefore half-heartedly; that they are seldom well trained, because this same expectation makes them impatient of long apprenticeship; that they have no business faculty; that they lack system; that they are too personal and too emotional. At this point the objectors, even if they be men, begin to get a little emotional themselves. They point with pain, almost with tears, to the unsexing influence which business pursuits have upon the woman herself. Either, they say, the woman twists the definite, manly business system to suit her exigencies—a thing not to be tolerated for a moment,—or she is herself warped to meet the situation. She is either unfeminized or broken on the wheel; and what decent man wants her to be either?

Moreover, while woman is upsetting business at this rate, what is becoming of the home? We are invited to consider the woful

increase of flat-buildings, apartment hotels, boarding-houses, childless homes, and divorce. In an appreciable number of cases, married women have been known to prefer working in a store to doing their own housework. Young women may be found by the scores in offices who cannot darn their own stockings nor wear a thimble with more grace than a man. They may be able to make fudges over a gas-jet, but not to make bread. They know nothing to speak of about children, nor do they want to know, any more than their brothers. In very truth, what sort of wives will these young things make? And if they are not, after all, extraordinarily efficient as business women, it does seem as if they had reached a point in their development where they are equal to the demands neither of the old ideal, nor of the new.

Having thus, I hope, done justice to those who oppose woman's industrial expansion, let us see what the women have to say for themselves. Since a business life is so hard on them, since it seems to go against what is commonly supposed to be the strongest instinct a woman has—namely, the instinct for maternity—powerful motives must be at work to force so steady a movement out of old conditions into new. To assign cheap reasons for anything happening on so large a scale, and involving such serious consequences, is not the part of wisdom. For if a certain movement is seen to be steadily progressing, meeting obstacles now and then, but never materially checked, an astute observer will give over remonstrance and go to investigating the cause.

The most obvious cause for the phenomenon we are here considering is the fact that women want financial independence. They want, indeed, as complete independence as their comparatively infirm bodies will permit. Instead of weakening this desire, natural to all human beings and increasing with every step of advance in civilization, their physical peculiarities intensify it. They see that, if they have not money enough to live on in their own way, they are virtually slaves, compelled to live, not as they would like to live, but as some one who can support them would like to have them live. Without such independence, their very virtues cease to be virtues and become mere bids for favor.

The desire persists in spite of the deepening recognition that women who take care of the house, bear and train the children, and perform the other duties incidental to wifehood and motherhood, in reality earn their own living, and more too. But their share of

the family income is still called "allowance," if, indeed, it is definite enough to have a name at all. And the independence of the most satisfactorily married woman is less than that of the unmarried woman in receipt of a salary. I remember being present once at a meeting of women—it was a suffrage meeting—when money was called for. Most of those present had come in their carriages; all wore good clothes and the fingers of some of them, as they fished in their lean purses, glittered with diamonds, but none of them had more than a very little money. The fact finally came to open speech, and the women explained that, while they had credit at the first-class stores, they had almost no actual cash: that was one of the things that made them interested in suffrage. They thought that, if women were recognized as the political equals of men, they might come, by and by, to be recognized as their economic equals.

These were married women for the most part, and women of position. The situation is more tense with the unmarried ones. For, whatever men may think in general about women in industrialism, the change has now progressed to that point where, if a woman is not married by the time she is, say, twenty-five, her male relatives feel that she ought to be looking out for something to do. The man who, on a small salary, cheerfully supports his own or his wife's adult, able-bodied, unmarried female relatives is an exception. If he has one thrown on his hands, in all probability he does his best to get some work for her, at anything respectable she is able to do; and then, when she is comfortably disposed of, he talks about the harm women are doing by taking positions that, otherwise, men might occupy.

And what about the unmarried woman's own position? Would she not be unworthy our respect and her own if, being able to earn her living, she declined to do it, using her sex as an apology for habitual pauperism? In the ranks below the middle this has long been settled; the working-woman is expected to work as much as the working-man. In the middle ranks, it is becoming settled, though still it ferments. In the top ranks, it is far from settled. In all of them women prize their financial independence, and are willing to pay for it the high price of health and comfort.

Even on the supposition that the special duty of women, the duty of bearing children, must necessarily come before any other, because upon it rests the welfare, the very existence of the race,

there still remains something to be said for the women who are forced to recognize other duties and obligations. We have spoken of unmarried women; these are a considerable and by no means insignificant army; but there are also the childless women, to whom has been denied the right to perform the paramount duty, and who must consequently find for themselves some secondary duty, or confess themselves useless; and there are—a large and piteous class—the women with children to support and no man to support them, the widows and the worse than widowed. What is to become of all these human beings? Are they to be foisted on some competent and tyrannical mother-in-law, to be ruled, as in China, while some man earns food and clothing for them all? Wages would indeed have to be raised considerably to enable him to do it! And, dear me, where would be the peace of his home?

Great as is the force of this cumulative desire for freedom on the part of women, a desire strengthened by indulgence, it is reinforced by quite another desire, springing from even greater depths—the desire for a fuller, larger womanhood. No one can know women at all well, can attend their clubs, read their literature, see them in their homes, and not know that the best and most enlightened of them feel themselves to-day narrowed and starved, unequal to the demands made upon them by a rapidly advancing civilization. They confess themselves inadequate wives and mothers. They chide themselves bitterly for the hitches in the running of the domestic machinery, although these hitches are, very likely, not due to any personal shortcomings. For instance, it is reported that for every forty thousand emigrant servants landed at Castle Garden, over one hundred thousand situations are waiting: a fact that makes it plain that even a conscientious and competent mistress may not be able to get or keep good servants. And this adds another straw to the burden of domestic responsibility, and sharpens the consciousness of inadequacy. No one can long endure the suspicion of failure in one direction, without trying whether, in some other, he cannot prove himself a success. Nor can one discover that all alone one cannot make one's home what it should be, without going abroad for sympathy and for help.

Yet another factor is adding its weight to the steady pressure that, against all fears, is forcing women into industrialism. The more competent a woman is, the more time she has to give to large

affairs outside of the home, and the more she desires to give it. Suppose, for instance, that she has given twenty years to education, twenty more to child-bearing and rearing, there are still twenty good years at her disposal, twenty full, ripe years, rich with experience, years during which, if she has been wise in her care of herself, she is stronger and better able to work than she ever was before in her life. What is such a woman to do? Sit down and fold her hands, retire from her brimming life, while yet she is in the full tide of it? Has the world no need of her disciplined forces, her knowledge, her ability, her self-control, her tested power of endurance? It is evident enough that nothing of this sort can be. Working forces, whatever they may be, whether in the form of a woman, or otherwise, seek and find a place for themselves, and in the end accomplish their appointed tasks.

What, then, since there are such difficulties on both sides of this vexed controversy, is the appointed work for women? This is the question we are, all of us, trying to solve. We are doing a lot of pushing and hauling about it, a good deal of protesting, and it all seems to be quite useless. There are good arguments on both sides, and things go right along regardless, anyhow. We might sit here in the corner and reflect awhile, not at all expecting to settle anything, but rather to comfort our disquieted souls.

Well, then, I have a guess to hazard: I guess that all occupations have their masculine and feminine sides; that nothing whatever is exclusively masculine or exclusively feminine, but that every occupation, every pleasure, every form of human activity has that about it which is specially fitted for man's nature, and that which is specially fitted for woman's nature; and that in reality no activity can be at its very best until it is carried on by both sexes.

It seems reasonable that there should be every kind of work for both men and women, when we reflect that women are of the same race as men, and therefore likely to be influenced by much the same desires, and to be able to satisfy them in much the same way? We confuse the issue when we make use of arguments based on the assumption that men and women are as distinct from each other as if they belonged to different races; the truth is that they are much more alike than they are different. We are led to make the assumption by means of a curious confusion of thought. In the first place, we are surprised at the differences which show

themselves, because they are contrasted against a background of fundamental similarities. The background, being that of our own habitual consciousness, does not intrude itself upon our attention; the differences outlined against it do. Hence we notice the differences sharply, exaggerate their importance, and arrive at the conclusion that they are greater than the resemblances!

Of course, we really know, when we stop to think about it, that women are human beings much more markedly than they are female beings; and that, therefore, we must provide for their human wants first, and for their sex wants second. Their first obligation is not to the race, but to themselves, just as self-preservation precedes and outranks in importance race preservation. This is because race preservation, among the higher creatures, is not at the expense of the individual, but by means of the individual.

Let me illustrate what I mean by a homely parallel. Close beside me, as I write, are two fox-terriers, Bob and Beth. The difference between their characters is perfectly apparent to any one who knows them. Bob is more sedate, stronger, more obedient; he is an indomitable fighter; has great endurance; and tolerates Beth's playfulness with a superb masculine disdain. She is silkier, slenderer, with livelier ways, and a much greater fondness for caresses. She has no inclination whatever to obedience. When she is called peremptorily—in any tone, in fact, that does not smack of dinner—instead of coming, as Bob does, she rolls over on her back and holds up appealing paws. She is the more excitable watch-dog, jerking out, on the slightest token of an alien presence, a sharp yappy bark vibrant with nerves. But anybody who should argue from these differences that she was of a different race from Bob, ought to see the two running down the fields together, their white, short-haired bodies, with the round black spots on the hind haunches, bounding over the ground with the same undulating spring, their dark ears flopping, their stumpy tails stiffly upright, the white part down the centre of their noses of the very same width. He would be put to it to tell which was which, and could never, under normal circumstances, suppose one to be a dog and the other a donkey.

I think it could be successfully maintained—but I do not want to attempt it now—that women are not only as human as men, but that the sex difference is slighter than the differences between persons of different nationalities. In our own country, for in-

stance, I think that the average American man would feel himself more akin to an American woman than to a colored man or an Indian. He might possibly find more in common between him and, say, his wife or his mother, or even his sister, than between him and a Russian or a Turk, although these latter were of his own sex.

If this is so we should expect to find it as justifiable to portion out industries according to nations as according to sex. And, indeed, it is quite true that some such apportionment does spontaneously take place. But we do not therefore think it necessary to restrict nations to those industries for which they show the most aptitude. Because England excels in manufactures, we do not think of chiding her for indulging mildly in agriculture. Nor because Russia is largely an agricultural nation do we object to her doing what manufacturing she pleases. In national affairs, we realize that such forbidding would be as preposterous as futile. But when the question of woman in industry comes up, we abandon this cool-headed, sensible attitude, and maintain with heat that, on the one hand, the sex differences are so great as to unfit her for certain large branches of industry, and that, on the other, they are so slightly rooted that, unless protected, they will disappear!

Furthermore, the entire contention that woman's work is in the home, and man's outside of the home, rests upon the assumption that we know what belongs to woman and what belongs to man. We have, each of us, a lovely little theory about what constitutes manliness and what womanliness, and this opinion we are ready to enforce at the point of—well, public opinion. Since we plainly do not know, why not experiment? The success that has followed such procedures in other fields might lead us to hope for some results if we should decide to make right conditions, furnish a nutrient jelly, and let the masculine and feminine bacteria develop in freedom.

Nor would such a procedure be very unsafe. Nobody can possibly believe that men and women, alone of all created beings, have a perverse tendency to act counter to the laws of their own existence. Therefore, only by setting them free to act as they please and watching them do it, can we form any reliable judgment as to what those laws really are.

We may find that men are more womanly, and women more manly, and both more human, and every individual more diverse,

than we had supposed. Or we may find that there are, indeed, well-defined lines of separation, but that these are more interlinked than we have supposed—that which is masculine on the plane of physical force being feminine on the intellectual planes; or something of that sort. It is, as the scientists say, too early in the proposed investigation to predict results with any degree of certainty. It is much too early to lay down laws of limitation.

But are we wholly confined to such antecedent probabilities as these? Are there no arguments to be had from example?

A hundred of them, a thousand, dear reader! Throughout the countless ages of the past, women used to do all the things we now think she ought not to do; and she has managed, somehow, to retain her womanliness. Many of the industries now claimed as masculine were originally feminine. Who was it that originally did all the spinning and weaving, which is now done by the big factories? Who did all the dyeing, embroidering, bleaching, sewing—all the things, in short, that go to transform fibres into wearable fabrics? Who used to feed the traveller? Who prepared all the food? Who even tilled the fields, and cared for the crops?

But these occupations, you protest, are still recognized as belonging to women—perhaps not spinning and weaving, and tilling the fields, but certainly sewing and cooking. Softly, softly! These things are now only recognized as hers within certain narrow limits. We will consider those limits presently. Meanwhile, let me ask you, if you take away from modern industrial life all activities relating to the preparation of food and clothing, have you not taken out an enormous slice? The packing-houses, the refrigerator-cars, the canning-factories; the grist-mills, the grain elevators; the reapers and binders; the factories in which these are made; the railroads which transport them; the ships, the barns, the warehouses; the herds of cattle, droves of pigs, flocks of sheep; the poultry-yards; egg-case factories; ice-warehouses; the woollen-mills, silk, cotton, and linen mills; cotton-fields, cotton-gins, mulberry-groves, flax-fields, dye-houses, schools of design, looms; tanneries, shoe-factories, knitting-factories, wholesale and retail stores—oh, the list is too long for Walt Whitman! These activities belong to those industries which were originally woman's, and which did not at all prevent her from being a woman.

Conditions have changed—true; but they have changed for the better. It is easier to plough a field with a modern steam-plough, or

even a horse-plough, than it is by hand and pushing power of body, yet women used to do it in that hard way—in some countries they do it yet, hitched up with a dog for yoke-fellow. It is easier to run a steam-loom than to throw the shuttle by hand and swing the treadles by thrust of foot. Yet women used to do it in the harder way. It is easier to do all these things than it used to be, and yet women are no longer thought fit for the work. Why? Nothing seems to have altered unless it is the size of the operations.

That this is the true ground for the distinction that is now sought to be made, a few instances will show. When tailoring was done on a small scale, in a little shop, there were many women tailors: as soon as it became a recognized business, well organized and lucrative, women tailors were crowded out. Wholesale milliners are mostly men; retail milliners, women. Women knit stockings by hand and tend the knitting-machines; but men own and administer the knitting factories. Garment-making is now a vast, for the most part badly organized, industry. Women and men side by side run the machines and do the work; but men own the big factories and sustain the sweating system. The dress-making division of it is in a transition stage, and changes may now be seen taking place. The dressmaker who goes out by the day is not yet an extinct species, and there are "Madames" who command high prices and have well-attended parlors. But the making of cloaks and suits to order, and selling them ready-made, is an industry that pays well, that is growing rapidly, and that is almost entirely, except as to the details of manufacture, in the hands of men.

It may possibly be that women have a special aptitude for cherishing the beginnings of things—a sort of industrial motherhood; and this, rather than man's tendency to grab a good thing for himself as soon as he sees it is good, may be the explanation of the above facts.

We are trying to be fair; but it bothers us to remember, just here, the undue importance attached to the comparative measurements of the brains of men and women. The average brain of women, it is said, is below the average brain of men as to size. The conclusion drawn is that women, with their little brains, ought to be content with the little jobs. But we suggest that this conclusion is at once too sweeping and too partial. A fairer rule would be that every woman with a head, say, twenty-two inches in

circumference, should be admitted to a full share in all public and economic affairs, and that all men with a smaller head should be debarred from large enterprises, and not allowed to vote.

Nor would it be a bit more absurd to do so, than to insist upon choosing workers by sex instead of by individual fitness. When we are not talking generalities we see this. We are able to perceive, for instance, that when we want a good dinner cooked to order, it is not wise to demand that it should be cooked by a woman—just any woman, so long as she is a woman,—while a French *chef* offers his manly services in vain. Or, being desirous of buying a piece of property, it is not likely that any of us would refuse to buy one that suited him in all other particulars, just because the owner was a woman, and, being a woman, unfitted, in his opinion, to transact large and important business.

Thus do we progress in practice beyond the limits of our narrow theory. And, in truth, in the matter of industrial division we have progressed far beyond our theories. That which we deprecate is already taking place, to a much greater degree than we recognize. And I think it is developing as we might suppose it would if the guess recorded above was correct. Many industries already show their dual nature. Some of them belong plainly to both sexes; some of them divide into two halves, a masculine and a feminine. For a conspicuous instance, we have the medical profession. Not only are there women doctors, with their special field of operation, but we have the twin—or, rather, the espoused—profession of trained nursing. The ministerial profession is reinforced by that of Sunday-school teaching, in which women predominate. The army, that most exclusively masculine of all organizations, now has its Red Cross, and even the Grand Army of the Republic has its Woman's Relief Corps. In the profession of teaching, there is still debate about the advisability of putting women into positions requiring much executive power; but there is no debate about the fitness of women for kindergarten and primary work. All modern penitentiaries have their women officers, many jails their police matrons, all reforms their women officers and active workers. Public institutions in which women are confined—asylums, poor-houses and hospitals—are officered by women as well as men, and the functions are well differentiated. No cosmopolitan journal can get along without its staff of women writers, whose work, while it sometimes overlaps that of the men,

is for the most part of quite another character. Women occupy all the fields of art; and, while in those fields their work is not so different from that of men as to justify a clear division-line, certainly not so different as to justify the division into inferior and superior, which is often rashly attempted, yet it is subtly different. One might say that it was broadly human, and delicately feminine. When our experiment has reached a more advanced stage, who shall say what interestingly complex divisions may not make their appearance? What Matthew Arnold calls "the stream of tendency" is not yet wholly evident, the lines of force are not yet well defined; still we catch glimpses of an intricate pattern taking shape before us which puts to the blush our childish attempts to make up patterns for ourselves.

Our argument is further reinforced by the observation that, while women have been invading the fields of labor outside of the home, men have been invading the fields heretofore sacred to the women of the house. To this no one, least of all, any woman, is raising the least objection. We are cheerfully ready to acknowledge—sometimes even inclined to urge—that the home is at this moment languishing for want of masculine interest in its various problems. To be sure, men now run our laundries, cook our breakfast cereals, bring our groceries to the door, bake our bread wholesale, dress our meats, grind our grains, paper our walls, paint our woodwork, do our house-cleaning and sweeping by means of compressed air, run our furnaces, supply us with electricity, fetch water to our doors, and make themselves pretty useful generally. But we want more. We want them to take up the problem of dish-washing, and come into council with us on the servant-girl question. And, recognizing, as we do from our hearts, that we cannot carry on the house and the family all alone, although it is supposed to be our peculiar sphere, it naturally occurs to us that what is usually supposed to be man's peculiar sphere may likewise be suffering for lack of us.

As for childless homes, are they really the fault of women in business? It seems to me that I have heard of men who did not like large families; did not want their wives preoccupied and anxious about the children; did not want to have so many mouths to fill, so many persons to support. It is possible that homes may be found here and there where the wives are not engaged in any business, not even the business of housekeeping, and where yet

there are no children. I know of other homes wherein the women are happy and busy, earning money for themselves and others, where there are self-reliant, unexact children who like the arrangement. The truth is, this question depends upon other things than the employment or non-employment of women.

To be sure, the woman of the olden times who was shut up to the strictly domestic life of the harem, her only road to honor and consideration lying through the bearing of male children, desired children more intensely than women do now, being ready to run the risk of having several girls on the bare chance of having a single boy. But that was an artificial heightening and perverting of the instinct of maternity. It is an outworn method, and will not work to-day. The modern woman distinctly refuses to be driven into child-bearing by any weapon whatever. This question she claims the right to settle for herself. If she is going to be a heroine and face death to bring forth life, she righteously demands that she shall do so in freedom; that she shall be allowed the strength and uplift of doing it, consciously, from the highest motives. To bear children under threat would deprive women of the dignity and honor of their high office, and deprive the children themselves of a right beginning. Whether the force exerted to move them from this position be economical, or whether it consist in a simple narrowing of life to that one issue, it is nevertheless compulsion, and, in the opinion of every woman, violation.

There is a similar answer to be made to the charge that divorce is more frequent in proportion as women gain financial independence. It has been pointed out more than once, and I need not dwell upon it here, that the higher the ideal of marriage the less a woman desires to enter upon it, or to remain in it, for financial reasons. Divorces are actually precipitated by the bitterness with which a high-spirited woman resents her economic dependence upon a man whom, perhaps, she no longer loves, or who no longer loves her, or, indeed, upon a man whom she loves too well to be willing to burden. One may well ask whether a divorce got because a woman refused longer to endure a loveless or ill-assorted marriage, was not more righteous than such a marriage endured for the sake of the money it afforded.

All these things go to show that, instead of the business world suffering from the advent of women, it is the home that is suffering from the age-long defection of men. If it is true that

every occupation has its masculine side and its feminine side, then it is true of the domestic occupations as well as of those belonging to the world of business; and it is evident that the home will suffer from an undue predominance of one element over the other. That our homes are not running smoothly, that flats and boarding-houses multiply, and divorces, and nervous prostrations, instead of proving that women ought to stay at home and set things right, may well mean that women need the fresher aid and wider spaces of the business world, the relief of doing things on a big scale, the calming effect of working impersonally. Business hours may be—and I think are—unnecessarily hard for a woman, but at home she has no hours at all. Her work, as the old saw has it, is “never done.” I met a young woman recently who said that she had never known good health until she went to work in a downtown office, and was obliged to keep regular hours. And if, in addition to the training in regularity and method which a business career gives a woman, and the freedom which her own income gives her, is added the influence which an active interest in his own home gives a man, we may hope for better homes, less full of fussy details, better ordered, reflecting on a small scale that flexibility and at the same time definiteness of organization which characterize modern industrial concerns. We shall not only have wives and mothers in these homes, but husbands and fathers.

If there is any human occupation which obviously has its masculine and feminine side, it is this business of making homes and rearing children. A woman can make a good imitation home all alone—better than a man can; but she cannot make a real one, and no one knows it better than she does. Nor can she do it with only her husband’s money to help her: she needs himself—his love, his special form of thought, his interest, and his presence. Nor can any children be brought up as they should be by only a mother, despite the panegyrics which have spurred her on to almost superhuman efforts.

Some day, let us hope, this struggling and sentimental old world will have arrived at an equilibrium of justice between the sexes; will have discovered, for one thing, the glories of fatherhood; will have linked the little place of rest and shelter and beginnings which we call “the home” with the big world of men and women, which is, after all, only the home of the adult, industrious human spirit.

MARION FOSTER WASHBURN.